

The William Grovatt House
Rancocas, Burlington County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, A.T.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

The William Grovatt House
Rancocas, Burlington County, New Jersey

Owner: William and Louisa L. Grovatt

Date of Erection: Main part about 1682

Architect:

Builder: Some member of the Green family

Present Condition: Poor

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - frame
construction, bricked
up between the studs

Interior walls - plaster
with some paneling

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - pitch

Historical Data:

The land upon which this house is built was granted by Daniel Wills, Sr. and Thomas Olive to Thomas Green on March 10, 1676. It was purchased in England at Bug Brook in the county of Northampton. John Wills Green by will became the next owner. His son Thomas inherited it in 1732. In the will of

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Thomas Green a lanto of two rooms is mentioned, and given to his wife Jane Green for her use for life after his son Thomas became twenty-one years of age. "Then it is my will that my loving wife Jane Green hold and enjoy all my plantation whereon I now dwell containing 200 acres of land with all the privileges thereunto belonging until my eldest son Thomas Green arrive to the age of twenty-one years and after that my said wife to have the two lanto rooms in the dwelling house and privilege of getting firewood upon said place during her widowhood and also I give and bequeath unto my said wife my riding mare and one feather bed and furniture in the lanto rooms. Then I give and bequeath unto my said son Thomas when he shall arrive to the age aforesaid all the aforesaid 200 acres of land with all the buildings and improvements thereon to him"..... This will, plus the fact that the house answers the description of the houses in Burlington of the period of 1680-90, that John Green took up this land as near as can be determined about this time, leads us to believe that the main part of the house was erected about 1682 by John Green. 1682 has been picked as the date, because a survey was made in the name of John Pain, an attorney for Thomas Green, in 1681. The original survey return reads "1681-Dec. 21-Survey for John Pain for the use of Thomas Green 200 acres on Northampton (Rancocas) River between Daniel Wills and Thomas Harden." Since the land was surveyed for use it seems logical to pick 1682 as about the date of erection.

The executors of Thomas Green, Joseph Clark and Joseph Green, on the sixteenth day of the tenth month in 1755 sold to Aaron Wills. It is through the will of Thomas Green that we learn the land had been resurveyed in 1681, and when resurveyed the plot of land left to Thomas by his father John contained 200 acres.

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It is interesting to note that the resurvey corrects the mistake copied into the map showing the development along the north shore of the Rancocas Creek. The map is found reproduced in the history of Burlington and Mercer Counties by Woodward and Hegeman.

In 1767 Samuel Haines acquired the property from Aaron and Rachel Wills. Samuel Haines, it appears, received the property as a legacy, for in 1760 he bought of William Deacon 22 acres of land, and this is described as adjoining the farm which the said Samuel Haines received by legacy from Aaron Wills.

In his will of November 15, 1820 Samuel Haines devised his property to his son Robert W. Haines. Robert Haines died about 1862 intestate, and the property passed to his children. One of his daughters, Rebecca, married Jacob Wills and the next transfer is from Jacob Wills and others (Haines) to Rachel Haines; this was in 1869. In 1885 the transfer reads Rachel Haines and others to William Haines. This property was seized in the same year and Clifford Powell special master in Chancery Court, transferred it to William F. and Louisa L. Grovatt in whose possession it still remains.

Bibliography:

Woodward, E. M.) History of Burlington
Hegeman, J. F.) and Mercer Counties, New Jersey Phila-
delphia, Everts and Peck, 1883

Records searched by F. A. Eckhart

Walter D. Ruth
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, A.I.A.
District Officer

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The name of the builder of this house not stated in our previous account is deduced as John Green as follows:

By a deed of 10 March 1676 Daniel Wills of Northampton, county of Northampton, England "practicer in chymestry", and Thomas Olive of Wellingborough in said county "haberdasher", acknowledged receipt of 10 pounds from Thomas Green of Bugbrooke in said county, "husbandman, son of Arthur Green" of same place, purchase money for 1/15 part of a propriety in West New Jersey, reciting a deed of 23 January last, from William Penn and others to grantors. Acknowledged 10 April 1723 by John Wills Esq., "son of the within named Daniel Wills", before John Reading, member of H. M. Council for N. J., and recorded in West New Jersey deed book D., p. 7.

Thomas¹ Green of Bugbrooke, county Northampton, England, abovesaid gave power of attorney to John Pain, dated 13 of 3 mo. 1680. A return of survey, 21 December 1681, shows 200 acres on the upper bank of Northampton alias Rankokus River, Burlington County, New Jersey, laid out for said Thomas Green per his attorney, between the tracts of Daniel Wills and Thomas Hardin, as recorded in West New Jersey Book A., p. 20. This Thomas Green of Bugbrooke devised his lands in New Jersey to his sons John and Benjamin Green, and the latter dying in his minority, the whole became vested in the former, as recited in West New Jersey Deed Book S., p. 498, cited postea.

John² Green abovenamed, (not "John Wills Green" as in our previous account) had arrived in Burlington County by 1685, in which year his cattle mark was registered there. (Stillwell's Hist. & Geneal. misc., vol. 2, p. 12). By his will dated 27 November 1732, proved 15 December 1732, he, as "John Green

of Wellingborrow and county of Burlington", West New Jersey, "yooman" (not Thomas as in our former account) devised to his wife Jane Green the use of "all my plantation whereon I now dwell, containing about 200 acres", until his eldest son Thomas³ Green came of age twenty-one years; she thonce "to have the two Lento Rooms in the Dwelling house"; to said son Thomas Green at age twenty-one all the said 200 acres with "all the Buildings and Improvements" thereon, he paying unto his mother 5 pounds yearly and unto my two youngest sons Josoph Green and Jacob Green and my two daughters Elizabeth Green and Martha Green 20 pounds each at age twenty-one; to my second son John Green 100 acres next adjoining my plantation; 300 acre tract in Hunterdon County and 5 acres of meadow marsh on Rancocus Creek to be sold; appoints executors wife Jane Green and brother-in-law John Stokes and friend Samuel Woolman. (Extracts from original will).

The Inventory of the personal estate of this John² Green "late of the Township of Wellingborough", Burlington County, New Jersey, dated 4 December 1732, includes this item:

"at the Est ond of the Lento a bedd and furniture".....

Thomas³ Green resided in the homestead inherited from his father as above described, and by his will dated 8 November 1754, proved 7 Dec. 1754, directed the executors, viz. brother Joseph Green and John Clark, to sell the homestead to pay his debts. His wife Hannah Groen is named therein, and two sons and two daughters mentioned.

Accordingly, by deed of 16th of 10th mo. 1755, said Joseph Green and John Clark, execrs. of the will of "Thomas Green late of Wellingborough", Burlington County, deceased, conveyed the homestead of 200 acres "with all

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and every the Houses, Outhouses, barns, stables", for 575 pounds money of West New Jersey to Aaron Wills of Northampton in same county. Recital is made in this deed that said Thomas Green inherited this land by the will of his father, John Green; that the latter inherited it partly by the will of his father Thomas Green of Eugbrook, County of Northampton in Great Britain and partly as heir-at-law of his brother Benjamin Green who died underage, and that said Thomas Green of Great Britain purchased a right of propriety to land in West New Jersey from Daniel Wills and Thomas Olive by Deed Poll dated 10 of 1st mo. 1676. (As outlined above). Recorded in West New Jersey Deed Book S, p. 498.

Architecture:

This extensive frame house is obviously a composite of three or four additions to the original unit built probably in 1681-1682 which is the highest part of the whole. This consists of two large rooms on the first floor with a cellar under, a large and small bedroom and stair-hall on the second, with a garret above them. To the east end of this main house was added the cellarless two story leanto of one room on each floor which is mentioned in the will of John Green, 27 November 1732. At the other end of the main house was next added a large kitchen, with two small bedrooms above, but without a cellar. Against this third construction were later erected sheds and workrooms. The foundation wall throughout are of stone locally quarried; the chimneys are of brick and project into the rooms as was customary.

The frame of this house is composed of rough, hand-hewn timber, the studding being spaced two to three feet apart, all crudely mortised, tenoned, and held together by oak pins. Between these structural members, brick masonry is

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inserted. The hewn rafters of the roof, three by four inches, are spaced about three feet apart.

Hand split white cedar clapboards cover the frame of the original unit of the house. These boards are an inch thick more or less and in widths from seven to sixteen inches. The siding of the kitchen addition is of similar widths to these, but finished with a beaded lower edge and laid in "ship-lap" fashion which by warping has now the effect of weather-boarding. The split cedar shingles of the roofs throughout are of varying lengths and laid some ten to twelve inches to the weather.

Above the first floor windows and door and extending the full length of the south front of the original house is an unusually wide projecting pent roof now carried by three square posts to form a porch, while similarly the kitchen annex, built onto the west end of the original house and in line with its front, retains its more normal pent roof. Probably this latter is the earliest example of this feature still extant in New Jersey. A molded cornice on the front of the original unit is notable, other cornices being extremely crude in detail.

Hand-split lath is applied to the interior of the frame and to the ceilings of the first floor on which is a very crude grade of whitewashed plaster. Partitions of vertical boards, one inch thick, instead of lathed and plastered studding indicate the early date of the construction. These enclose likewise the winding stairways in box style.

Frames of doors, as also of the double hung windows, are cut from the solid timber with few moldings run thereon. However, the extent and detail of the woodwork finish of the fireplace

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wall composed of panelling, cabinets, and mantel are of a much superior character and detail. Except in the oldest unit the flooring boards have been later replaced.

Bibliography:

West Jersey deed books D-7, S-498,
N-259; original wills as cited

DATA NOT COMPILED AND NOT GUARANTEED
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